



Gilas allow limited access for freeway study

Kerry Fehr-Snyder

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At first blush, it looks like the most hopeful sign for South Mountain Freeway foes in years.

But the Gila River Indian Community wants to make it clear that allowing the state transportation department access to its land doesn't mean that the community has reversed its objection to building the proposed 22-mile freeway on reservation land.

"That's not even on the table," said spokeswoman Alia Maisonet. "This is just so it (the Arizona Department of Transportation) can complete the study for the Pecos Road alignment."

The community announced Tuesday that it will give ADOT one year to access its land for an ongoing environmental-impact statement, which is due out next year. Over the years, there has been talk of pushing the freeway alignment south onto reservation land, but the community has barred ADOT from studying that option.

The community's new decision doesn't change that, Maisonet said. Instead, ADOT will be allowed to study the water runoff, pollution and other environmental impacts created by the \$1.7 billion freeway along the proposed Pecos Road alignment in Ahwatukee.

"We explained to ADOT that this is not to mean there is a freeway on our land or a freeway even to be considered on the land," Maisonet said.

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